Through the Looking Glass
by John Everett Daquino

WONDERMARE
Apexart
291 Church Street, New York, NY 10013
July 8, 2009 - August 8, 2009

For the duration of Wondermare at Apex Art, visitors can come between the hours of 3 and 5 P.M. on Tuesdays and Thursdays and be part of this psychedelic film, which is loosely based on the characters in Alice in Wonderland. One can choose from a number of costumes and stand in front of a green screen answering a question randomly selected from a deck of cards. The new footage is added to the already existing clips, which loop on multiple television screens and projectors that fill the adjacent gallery.

For the two artists (Susan McIntosh and Albert Wilking) who organized the project, Wondermare is a form of release, a break from the prescribed roles that we as adults have to carry out in order to function in normal society. The characters in the film are all exaggerated personas, “Alice” as the naive child/woman and the “Mad Hatter” that revels in all sorts of destructive behavior, to name a few.

However, where this Dionysian adventure falls apart is Ironically in its neatness. The installation is very sterile, equipped with all new technology. The gallery is not dark enough; the projected images become washed-out. In addition, the sound is barely audible. What Wondermare becomes, like a lot of contemporary video, is a concept without a thoroughly considered delivery. If presented differently, then perhaps Wondermare could be an engulfing, disorientating experience that transported us into the realms of madness; but as it is currently presented, it is business as usual.

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(Images: Video installation stills from Wondermare. Courtesy Apexart.)